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## REVIEWS AND NOTES

*The Life of Thaddeus Stevens*, By JAMES A. WOODBURN, PH.D.  
(Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.) Pp. 610. 1913.

Books sometimes suffer, as children do, from inability to choose the author of their being. This biography, the best and probably the definitive life of Stevens, does not belong to this class. A satisfactory account of the great "reconstructionist" could not be written by a man of partisan spirit; it would be either a fulsome eulogy or an untempered denunciation. Professor Woodburn's historical spirit and natural disposition combine to produce a biography which does full justice to its subject and at the same time never misrepresents him or his work. The author's task, moreover, has been thoroughly done. Practically all existing materials, public records, private letters, even oral tradition, have been drawn upon and welded together in a masterly historical and literary production. Nowhere can one find a better representation of the great movements with which Stevens identified himself, especially the prosecution of the war against the seceding states and the reconstruction after the war.

Stevens' long career is covered with a just proportion devoted to his private life, his business affairs and his public services. The reviewer finds only one episode of importance which is not satisfactorily described, namely Stevens' apparent indifference, or even opposition to the appropriation necessary to complete the Alaskan purchase and his later support of this appropriation. At the time, there was some talk of scandal in connection with the completion of this affair and the whole transaction has never been satisfactorily explained. It may well be, however, that material is not available for an inside explanation, or that there is after all nothing really there to explain. With this possible exception we have in Professor Woodburn's book a complete account of Stevens' career as an Anti-Mason Pennsylvania politician, as an iron manufacturer and as leader of the national House of Representatives during the war and reconstruction.

Perhaps the greatest single contribution which Professor Woodburn makes to our understanding of Stevens and the public questions of his day is contained in the very interesting chapter upon "Ways

and Means in the War, the Greenback" and the two later chapters upon "The Greenbacker." Here Stevens' advocacy of the Legal Tender act, his attempt to make greenbacks legal tender for everything, even payments of interest on government bonds, and his later effort to continue and extend the issue of greenbacks are presented so sympathetically as, not indeed to convince us that he was right, but to enable us to understand clearly his side of the controversy and to give us respect for his views.

An authoritative statement of the facts upon which Stevens based his policy of reconstruction, and of the conditions which formed the background of this policy is very timely. With a due sense of the evils of Reconstruction as the Stevens faction carried it out, and of the growth of humanitarian and philanthropic sentiments since 1868, the reviewer finds himself unable to join in the unmitigated condemnation with which reconstruction is now usually visited. Stevens and the radical Republicans faced a situation in which it seemed more than likely that the results of the Civil War, except in the bare saving of the Union, would be lost. Southern negroes could have been kept in virtual slavery and the anti-war element in the Democratic party might have gotten control of the government, had there been weakness or halfway measures in the reconstruction of the South. A policy of unreserved generosity on the part of the North, an unconditional recognition of local governments in the South, and an immediate consigning of the war to oblivion were under the circumstances hardly to be expected. Failing in this, it was probably fortunate that a man like Stevens came to the front to drive firmly and relentlessly to the bitter end the policy of forcing upon the South the recognition of the new order of things.

The volume as a whole is worthy of its author, the dean of Indiana historians, and of the years spent in its preparation. It is a real pleasure to read a book, at whose close one feels that he has been face to face with a great historical subject treated in the best historical manner of our modern scientific school.

C. B. COLEMAN

*George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771-1781.* Edited with introduction and notes by JAMES ALTON JAMES, Northwestern University. [Collections of the Illinois Historical Library, Vol. VIII, Vir-